

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for managing purchasing data, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving purchasing data from a purchasing entity, wherein the purchasing data relates to purchase transactions for a plurality of products purchased by the purchasing entity;

identifying, for each transaction, a product related to the transaction by comparing the received purchasing data with product information stored in a product index, wherein the product information in the index associates at least a portion of the received purchasing data with a particular product;

modifying the received purchasing data to include data representing the identified product; and

processing the modified purchasing data to reflect all purchase transactions concerning the identified product.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the receiving step further includes the substep of:

determining whether the received purchasing data complies with predetermined purchasing data criteria defining data expected from the purchasing entity.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the receiving step further includes the substep of:

formatting the received purchasing data to comply with predetermined data storage requirements.

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4. The method of claim 1, wherein the product index further includes a weight value for each association of a particular product to a portion of the received purchasing data, wherein each weight value defines a relative accuracy of the corresponding association, and wherein the product identifying step further includes the substeps of:

determining, from the index, products associated with a portion of the received purchasing data; and

identifying the product related to the transaction based on the weight values of the products determined from the index.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the step of identifying the product based on the weight values further includes the substep of:

identifying the product related to the transaction by selecting the product having the highest weight value.

6. The method of claim 4, wherein the method includes the substep of:

updating the weight values based on an accuracy determination of the corresponding associations.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the product identifying step further includes the substeps of:

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comparing the received purchasing data with product information stored in a plurality product indexes, wherein each index associates different portions of the received purchasing data with products; and

identifying the product related to the transaction based on the comparisons with the product information in each of the plurality of indexes.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein each of the product indexes includes a weight value for each association of a particular product to a portion of the received purchasing data, wherein each weight value defines a relative accuracy of the corresponding association, and wherein the identifying step further includes the substeps of:

determining, from the indexes, products associated with a portion of the received purchasing data; and

identifying the product related to the transaction based on the weight values of the products determined from the indexes.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the step of identifying the product based on the weight values further includes the substep of:

combining the weight values for each determined product from each index; and

identifying the product related to the transaction by selecting the product having the highest combined weight value.

10. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

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identifying, for each transaction, a supplier associated with the particular transaction;

modifying the received purchasing data to include data representing the identified supplier; and

processing the modified purchasing data to reflect all purchase transactions concerning the identified supplier.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the step of identifying a supplier includes the substep of:

identifying, for each transaction, a supplier associated with the transaction by comparing the received purchasing data with supplier identification information stored in a supplier database.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the method further includes the step of:

updating the supplier database with new supplier identification information about suppliers contained in the received purchasing data.

13. The method of claim 11, wherein the supplier identifying step further includes the substep of:

comparing the received purchasing data with supplier identification information to determine a match based on at least one of the following matching criteria: (1) an exact match between a portion of the received purchasing data with the supplier identification

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information; or (2) a match of a predetermined portion of the received purchasing data with the supplier identification information.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the step of comparing the purchasing data includes determining a match based on at least one of the following supplier matching criteria: (1) a name of a supplier; (2) an acronym formed from a supplier's name; (3) an address or a portion of an address of a supplier; (4) a telephone or facsimile number of a supplier; or (5) an identification number assigned to a supplier.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein a plurality of the supplier matching criteria may be used to determine a match.

16. The method of claim 10, wherein the step of identifying a supplier further includes the substep of:

assigning a supplier identification code corresponding to the identified supplier of each transaction; and

wherein the step of processing the modified purchasing data further includes the substep of sorting the transactions according to the assigned supplier identification code.

17. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of processing the modified purchasing data further includes the substep of:

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analyzing the modified purchasing data to summarize purchasing activity of the purchasing entity.

18. The method of claim 1, wherein the index associates products with information on suppliers included in the received purchasing data.

19. The method of claim 1, wherein the index associates products with textual information included in the received purchasing data.

20. The method of claim 1, wherein the index associates products with an identification code included in the received purchasing data.

21. The method of claim 1, wherein the method includes the step of:
negotiating for purchases based on the processed modified purchasing data.

22. A computer for managing purchasing data, the computer comprising:
a memory having program instructions; and
a processor, responsive to the programming instructions, configured to:
receive purchasing data from a purchasing entity, wherein the purchasing data relates to purchase transactions for a plurality of products purchased by the purchasing entity;

identify, for each transaction, a product related to the transaction by
comparing the received purchasing data with product information stored in a product

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index, wherein the product information in the index associates at least a portion of the received purchasing data with a particular product;

modify the received purchasing data to include data representing the identified product; and

process the modified purchasing data to reflect all purchase transactions concerning the identified product.

23. The computer of claim 22, wherein the processor is further configured to:
determine whether the received purchasing data complies with predetermined purchasing data criteria defining data expected from the purchasing entity.

24. The computer of claim 22, wherein the processor is further configured to:
format the received purchasing data to comply with predetermined data storage requirements.

25. The computer of claim 22, wherein the product index further includes a weight value for each association of a particular product to a portion of the received purchasing data, wherein each weight value defines a relative accuracy of the corresponding association, and wherein the processor is further configured to:

determine, from the index, products associated with a portion of the received purchasing data; and

identify the product related to the transaction based on the weight values of the products determined from the index.

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26. The computer of claim 25, wherein the processor is further configured to:
identify the product related to the transaction by selecting the product having the highest weight value.
27. The computer of claim 25, wherein the processor is further configured to:
update the weight values based on an accuracy determination of the corresponding associations.
28. The computer of claim 22, wherein the processor is further configured to:
compare the received purchasing data with product information stored in a plurality product indexes, wherein each index associates different portions of the received purchasing data with products; and
identify the product related to the transaction based on the comparisons with the product information in each of the plurality of indexes.
29. The computer of claim 28, wherein each of the product indexes includes a weight value for each association of a particular product to a portion of the received purchasing data, wherein each weight value defines a relative accuracy of the corresponding association, and wherein the processor is further configured to:
determine, from the indexes, products associated with a portion of the received purchasing data; and

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identify the product related to the transaction based on the weight values of the products determined from the indexes.

30. The computer of claim 29, wherein the processor is further configured to:
combine the weight values for each determined product from each index; and
identify the product related to the transaction by selecting the product having the highest combined weight value.

31. The computer of claim 22, wherein the processor is further configured to:
identify, for each transaction, a supplier associated with the particular transaction;
modify the received purchasing data to include data representing the identified supplier; and
process the modified purchasing data to reflect all purchase transactions concerning the identified supplier.

32. The computer of claim 31, wherein the processor is further configured to:
identify, for each transaction, a supplier associated with the transaction by comparing the received purchasing data with supplier identification information stored in a supplier database.

33. The computer of claim 32, wherein the processor is further configured to:

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update the supplier database with new supplier identification information about suppliers contained in the received purchasing data.

34. The computer of claim 33, wherein the processor is further configured to:
compare the received purchasing data with supplier identification information to determine a match based on at least one of the following matching criteria: (1) an exact match between a portion of the received purchasing data with the supplier identification information; or (2) a match of a predetermined portion of the received purchasing data with the supplier identification information.

35. The computer of claim 34, wherein the processor is further configured to determine a match based on at least one of the following supplier matching criteria: (1) a name of a supplier; (2) an acronym formed from a supplier's name; (3) an address or a portion of an address of a supplier; (4) a telephone or facsimile number of a supplier; or (5) an identification number assigned to a supplier.

36. The computer of claim 35, wherein the processor is further configured to use a plurality of the supplier matching criteria to determine a match.

37. The computer of claim 31, wherein the processor is further configured to:
assign a supplier identification code corresponding to the identified supplier of each transaction; and

sort the transactions according to the assigned supplier identification code.

38. The computer of claim 22, wherein the processor is further configured to:
analyzing the modified purchasing data to summarize purchasing activity of the
purchasing entity.

39. The computer of claim 22, wherein the index associates products with
information on suppliers included in the received purchasing data.

40. The computer of claim 22, wherein the index associates products with textual
information included in the received purchasing data.

41. The computer of claim 22, wherein the index associates products with an
identification code included in the received purchasing data.

42. The computer of claim 22, wherein the processor is further configured to:
negotiate for purchases based on the processed modified purchasing data.

43. A system for managing purchasing data, the system comprising:
means for receiving purchasing data from a purchasing entity, wherein the
purchasing data relates to purchase transactions for a plurality of products purchased
by the purchasing entity;
means for identifying, for each transaction, a product related to the transaction by
comparing the received purchasing data with product information stored in a product

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index, wherein the product information in the index associates at least a portion of the received purchasing data with a particular product;

means for modifying the received purchasing data to include data representing the identified product; and

means for processing the modified purchasing data to reflect all purchase transactions concerning the identified product.

44. The system of claim 43, wherein the receiving means further includes:

means for determining whether the received purchasing data complies with predetermined purchasing data criteria defining data expected from the purchasing entity.

45. The system of claim 43, wherein the receiving means further includes:

means for formatting the received purchasing data to comply with predetermined data storage requirements.

46. The system of claim 43, wherein the product index further includes a weight value for each association of a particular product to a portion of the received purchasing data, wherein each weight value defines a relative accuracy of the corresponding association, and wherein the product identifying means further includes:

means for determining, from the index, products associated with a portion of the received purchasing data; and

means for identifying the product related to the transaction based on the weight values of the products determined from the index.

47. The system of claim 46, wherein the means for identifying the product based on the weight values further includes:

means for identifying the product related to the transaction by selecting the product having the highest weight value.

48. The system of claim 46, wherein the system further includes:

means for updating the weight values based on an accuracy determination of the corresponding associations.

49. The system of claim 43, wherein the product identifying means further includes:

means for comparing the received purchasing data with product information stored in a plurality product indexes, wherein each index associates different portions of the received purchasing data with products; and

means for identifying the product related to the transaction based on the comparisons with the product information in each of the plurality of indexes.

50. The system of claim 49, wherein each of the product indexes includes a weight value for each association of a particular product to a portion of the received purchasing data, wherein each weight value defines a relative accuracy of the corresponding association, and wherein the identifying means further includes:

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means for determining, from the indexes, products associated with a portion of the received purchasing data; and

means for identifying the product related to the transaction based on the weight values of the products determined from the indexes.

51. The system of claim 50, wherein the means for identifying the product based on the weight values further includes:

means for combining the weight values for each determined product from each index; and

means for identifying the product related to the transaction by selecting the product having the highest combined weight value.

52. The system of claim 43, further comprising:

means for identifying, for each transaction, a supplier associated with the particular transaction;

means for modifying the received purchasing data to include data representing the identified supplier; and

means for processing the modified purchasing data to reflect all purchase transactions concerning the identified supplier.

53. The system of claim 52, wherein the means for identifying a supplier further includes:

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means for identifying, for each transaction, a supplier associated with the transaction by comparing the received purchasing data with supplier identification information stored in a supplier database.

54. The system of claim 53, wherein the system further includes:

means for updating the supplier database with new supplier identification information about suppliers contained in the received purchasing data.

55. The system of claim 53, wherein the supplier identifying means further includes:

means for comparing the received purchasing data with supplier identification information to determine a match based on at least one of the following matching criteria: (1) an exact match between a portion of the received purchasing data with the supplier identification information; or (2) a match of a predetermined portion of the received purchasing data with the supplier identification information.

56. The system of claim 55, wherein the means for comparing the purchasing data includes means for determining a match based on at least one of the following supplier matching criteria: (1) a name of a supplier; (2) an acronym formed from a supplier's name; (3) an address or a portion of an address of a supplier; (4) a telephone or facsimile number of a supplier; or (5) an identification number assigned to a supplier.

57. The system of claim 56, wherein a plurality of the supplier matching criteria may be used to determine a match.

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58. The system of claim 52, wherein the means for identifying a supplier further includes:

means for assigning a supplier identification code corresponding to the identified supplier of each transaction; and

wherein the means for processing the modified purchasing data further includes means for sorting the transactions according to the assigned supplier identification code.

59. The system of claim 43, wherein the means for processing the modified purchasing data further includes:

means for analyzing the modified purchasing data to summarize purchasing activity of the purchasing entity.

60. The system of claim 43, wherein the index associates products with information on suppliers included in the received purchasing data.

61. The system of claim 43, wherein the index associates products with textual information included in the received purchasing data.

62. The system of claim 43, wherein the index associates products with an identification code included in the received purchasing data.

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63. The system of claim 43, wherein the system further includes:
means for negotiating for purchases based on the processed modified
purchasing data.